

Laurel Hill Plantation House
Rodney and Red Licks Roads
Rodney vicinity
Jefferson County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-207

HABS
MISS,
32-ROD.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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LAUREL HILL PLANTATION HOUSE

HABS No. MS-207

Location: Rodney and Red Licks Roads, Rodney Vicinity,
Jefferson County, Mississippi

Present Owner: Mrs. Marie T. Logan
535 Ratcliff Street
Natchez, Mississippi 39120

Present Occupant: Demolished 1983, following a fire on November 11, 1982

Significance: Laurel Hill was built c. 1815 by Dr. Rush Nutt, a prominent agriculturalist and scientist known for his improvements of agricultural implements. Dr. Nutt developed the Petit Gulf strain of cotton that became popular in the mid-1830s and was the first to harness steam power to operate cotton gins. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 29, 1973.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1815
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of titles was compiled from the records of Jefferson County.

July 31, 1816	Bureau of Land Management Final Certificate #547	United States to Rush Nutt - Sec. 8, T10N, R1W, Washington Meridian, Mississippi, con- taining 505.42 acres. Consideration: \$1,101.38. Final certificate issued March 29, 1825.
March 12, 1829	Deed Book B, Page 360	Sarah Calvit to Rush Nutt, 63-3/4 acres in the "Petit Gulph" tract. Consideration: \$1,900.
August 2, 1837	Probate Record B, Page 252	Rush Nutt to Haller Nutt (son) by Last Will and Testament.
June 2, 1846	Deed Book F, Page 45	Haller Nutt to James M. Batchelor, 1438-1/2 acres. Consideration: \$26,500.

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January 25, 1858	Deed Book K, Page 331	James M. Batchelor to Joseph S. Dohan, 885 acres. Consideration: \$7,000.
April 21, 1870	Will Book B, Page 112	Joseph S. Dohan, deceased, to Daniel J. Dohan.
October 1, 1879	Deed Book III, Page 474	State of Mississippi by S. Given, Auditor of Public Accounts, to Thomas H. Snodgrass, 855 acres. Consideration: \$311.74 for taxes due to the state.
February 10, 1890	Deed Book RR, Page 58	Thomas H. Snodgrass to Henry Winter and James W. Martin, 855 acres. Consideration: \$1,500.
March 12, 1910	Deed Book T, Page 407	W. A. Martin, heir of James W. Martin, to Mrs. Ethel Ellis, 855 acres. Consideration: \$1.00.
April 23, 1915	Deed Book V, Page 289	Ethel M. Ellis to C. Oliver Holmes, 855 acres. Consideration: \$5,250.
November 24, 1919	Deed Book Y, Page 285	C. O. Holmes to J. S. Logan, 855 acres. Consideration: \$8,500.
July 26, 1933	Deed Book 4II, Page 49	J. S. Logan, et al., to Mrs. Katie Schwartz Logan, 855 acres. Consideration: \$3.00
August 15, 1952	Will Book D, Page 101	Katie S. Logan to Dr. J. G. Logan.
April 25, 1968	Will Book E, Page 559	Dr. J. G. Logan to Mrs. Marie T. Logan.

4. Original plans and construction: The original plan contained a narrow stairhall with two rooms on either side.

5. Alterations and additions: As of 1975, the galleries of the north elevation had been partially enclosed to provide a modern kitchen and baths. At the rear of the main block, a utility porch had been added at an undetermined date. Severe damage from a fire on November 11, 1982, resulted in demolition of the building in 1983.

B. Historical Context:

Laurel Hill was built by Dr. Rush Nutt (1781-1837), an important figure in the history of Mississippi agriculture. He developed the Mexican strain of cotton that became popular in the mid-1930s because it was easy to pick, immune to rot, and produced fibers of superior quality. Nutt is also credited with improving the Whitney gin by adding flumes for storing dirt from the staples. He was also the first to use steam instead of animal power in the operation of cotton gins. Although he did not originate the practice, he popularized circular or horizontal plowing to preserve the hills from erosion.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement

1. Architectural character: Laurel Hill was a simple frame dwelling with a double gallery extending along two of its sides. The interior was treated with simple detail and, later, some more elaborate Greek Revival mantels.
2. Condition of fabric: Demolished following fire.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall: The rectangular, two and one-half story building had seven bays across the long, principal facade.
2. Foundations: A series of brick piers served as foundations.
3. Wall construction: The walls were of frame construction, covered with clapboard, and painted white.
4. Structural system: Wood frame.
5. Gallery: A double gallery extended across the full width of the facade and along the north elevation. Square piers are used at the first level while shorter round columns are used at the second floor level.
6. Chimneys: There are two square interior chimneys. They were symmetrically placed at the ridge of the roof.

7. Openings: The doorways were surrounded by simple architraves. At the time of the fire, some of the original three-light transoms were still in place. The windows were double hung and had nine over six glazing.
8. Roof: The gabled roof included a large projection across the facade elevation to shelter the double gallery. The cornices were treated with simple, unmoulded vergeboards.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The plans of both floors of the main block consists of, at the front, a narrow enclosed stairhall with two rooms (19' by 19') on either side, and a central hall at the rear with two rooms on each side.
2. Stairways: The most unusual feature of the interior is the closed stairway, a sort of chute between the first and second floors. One would have expected a central hall featuring a fine open stairway.
3. Flooring: Wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings were of plaster. Chair-rails and baseboards were used throughout.
5. Openings: The six paneled doors were set under substantial architraves with large molded backbands.
6. Decorative features and trim: Original Greek Revival marble mantels were still in place in two rooms at the time of the fire. Simple wooden mantels with engaged columns remained in place on the second floor.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The lightly wooded site was located on a small rise of land.
2. Historic landscape design: The polygonal cistern was constructed of wooden lattice and covered with a single, conical roof of shingles.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.
National Register File; National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Laurel Hill Plantation House Nomination Form. May, 1972.

National Register File; National Register of Historic Places, Laurel Hill
Plantation House file, Washington, D. C. 1984.

Project coordinated by the Mississippi
Department of Archives and History.
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Architectural Historian. 1975

Edited by Marion K. Schlefer
Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington, D. C.
1984